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NOTES ON THE OLD TEMPLE OF ATHENA ON THE ACROPOLIS

BY WILLIAM NICKERSON BATES

THE problem of the old temple of Athena on the Acropolis at Athens has for some time been a most important one in Athenian topography. This temple, the foundations of which were uncovered in 1886, was destroyed by the Persians under Xerxes at the time of his invasion of Greece. It attracted no particular attention until Dörpfeld advanced his theory that this temple was rebuilt by the Athenians when they came back to Athens; that it was here that the state moneys were stored during the greater part of the fifth century; and that the building remained standing during the whole of the classical period and perhaps lasted down into the middle ages. Dörpfeld conjectures the existence of this temple chiefly because of certain inscriptions which he has difficulty in referring either to the Parthenon or to the Erechtheum. His arguments, together with the evidence upon which they are based, have been set forth at length in a series of papers in the *Mittheilungen des k. d. arch. Instituts zu Athen*,¹ and have been supported in a recent paper in the *American Journal of Archaeology* by A. S. Cooley.² The arguments brought forward in these articles I shall not discuss. My object in the present paper is to show that we have important literary evidence which seems to prove that from the time of its destruction the old temple of Athena was never rebuilt. This evidence, so far as I know, has not been examined by any one discussing this subject; and where it has been discussed it has not received the attention which it deserves.

This evidence is as follows: Lycurgus in his speech against Leocrates, in praising the ancestors of the men of his own generation, refers to an

¹ Dörpfeld's articles are to be found in Vols. XI (1886) p. 337 ff.; XII (1887) p. 25 ff.; p. 190 ff.; XV (1890) p. 420 ff.; XXII (1897) p. 159 ff. For other recent papers see *American Journal of Archaeology*, Vol. III (1899) p. 346 n. 1.

² Vol. III (1899) p. 345 ff.

oath which he says was taken by the Greeks before the battle of Plataea. That oath is then quoted and runs as follows (§ 81): Οὐ ποιήσομαι περὶ πλείονος τὸ ζῆν τῆς ἐλευθερίας, οὐδὲ καταλείψω τοὺς ἡγεμόνας οὔτε ζῶντας οὔτε ἀποθανόντας, ἀλλὰ τοὺς ἐν τῇ μάχῃ τελευτήσαντας τῶν συμμάχων ἅπαντας θάψω. καὶ κρατήσας τῷ πολέμῳ τοὺς βαρβάρους τῶν μὲν μαχισαμένων ὑπὲρ τῆς Ἑλλάδος πόλεων οὐδεμίαν ἀνάστατον ποιήσω, τὰς δὲ τὰ τοῦ βαρβάρου προελομένας ἀπάσας δεκατεύσω· καὶ τῶν ἱερῶν τῶν ἐμπρησθέντων καὶ καταβληθέντων ὑπὸ τῶν βαρβάρων οὐδὲν ἀνοικοδομήσω παντάπασι, ἀλλ' ὑπόμνημα τοῖς ἐπιγιγνομένοις εἴσω καταλείπεσθαι τῆς τῶν βαρβάρων ἀσεβείας.

It is the last part of this oath which concerns us. If, as Lycurgus says, the Athenians took this oath and if they kept it, the old Athena temple on the Acropolis could not have been rebuilt. For if the temple was not rebuilt soon after the return of the Athenians to Athens, it was not rebuilt at all, since neither Dörpfeld nor any one else would maintain that it was rebuilt at a later period.

There is other evidence besides this. Pausanias in the tenth book¹ gives an account of the temple of Apollo at Abae and explains that Xerxes burned that temple. He then continues: Ἑλλήνων δὲ τοῖς ἀντιστάσι τῷ βαρβάρῳ τὰ κατακαυθέντα ἱερὰ μὴ ἀνιστάναι σφίσιν ἔδοξεν, ἀλλὰ ἐς τὸν πάντα ὑπολείπεσθαι χρόνον τοῦ ἔχθους ὑπομνήματα· καὶ τοῦδε ἕνεκα οἱ τε ἐν τῇ Ἀλκιονίᾳ ναοὶ καὶ Ἀθηναῖοι τῆς Ἥρας ἐπὶ ὁδῷ τῇ Φαληρικῇ καὶ ὁ ἐπὶ Φυλῆρῳ τῆς Δήμητρος καὶ κατ' ἐμὲ ἔτι ἡμῖκαντοί μένουσι. τοιαύτην θείαν καὶ τοῦ ἐν Ἀβαις ἱεροῦ τότε γε εἶναι δοκῶ, ἐς ὃ ἐν τῷ πολέμῳ τῷ Φωκικῷ βιασθέντας μάχῃ Φωκίων ἄνδρας καὶ ἐς Ἀβας ἐκπεφηνότας αὐτοὺς τε οἱ Θηβαῖοι τοὺς ἱκέτας καὶ τὸ ἱερόν, δεύτερον δὲ οὗτοι μετὰ Μήδους, ἔδοσαν πυρὶ· εἰστέκει δ' οὖν καὶ ἐς ἐμὲ ἔτι οἰκοδομημάτων ἀσθενέστατον ὅπύσα δὴ ἡ φλόξ ἐλυμῆναι, αἶτε ἐπὶ τῷ Μηδικῷ προλωβησαμένῳ πυρὶ, αὐθις ὑπὸ τοῦ Βοιωτίου πυρὸς κατεργασμένον. In other words, the Persians burned the temple at Abae and the small part of it which was not destroyed was burned in later times by the Thebans. The temple, then, had not been rebuilt down to the time of the Phocian war, and it was not rebuilt after that time, as I shall show later. Pausanias does not say where the oath was taken.

¹ 10, 35, 2-3.

There is still another reference to this oath. Diodorus in a passage in the eleventh book¹ says that before the Greeks marched to Plataea, they collected at the Isthmus where they decided to take an oath to preserve their unity of purpose and to force themselves to undergo all dangers bravely. Then follows the oath as given in Lycurgus, with a few slight changes in text.² After this, Diodorus goes on to say that after taking the oath the Greeks started for Boeotia.

These are the only accounts of this oath which I have been able to find, but they are sufficient to prove that in later Greek times the story of this oath was a well established tradition. This tradition can without difficulty be traced back at least to writers of the fourth century, for the oath as we have it in Diodorus undoubtedly goes back to Ephorus. We do not know, to be sure, when the oath found in Lycurgus was inserted into the text, but we have hints enough in the speech proper to prove that in all probability we have the oath essentially as Lycurgus knew it. The source of the passage in Pausanias is more difficult to determine. The one author of whom he is making constant use in this part of his work is Herodotus. This is clear to any one who reads the two authors together; and what is more, Pausanias mentions Herodotus no less than three times three pages before this passage. He even makes use of Herodotus in this very chapter until he comes to the account of the oath. There is no mention of the oath in Herodotus. Consequently we must imagine that Pausanias got his information on this point elsewhere, perhaps from some oral source at Abae. This discussion makes it clear, I think, that the story of the oath as we have it goes back at least to the fourth century B.C.

But we have still another most important piece of literary evidence. Plutarch in his *Life of Pericles*³ says that Pericles proposed a decree that all the Greek cities both large and small should be invited to send delegates to Athens to deliberate about the Greek temples which the barbarians had burnt, and the sacrifices which they had vowed to the

¹ II, 29, 1-4.

² The part relating to the temples reads, *καὶ τῶν ἱερῶν τῶν ἐμπρησθέντων καὶ καταβληθέντων οὐδὲν οἰκοδομήσω, ἀλλ' ὑπόμνημα τοῖς ἐπεγινομένοις ἔδσω καὶ καταλείψω τῆς τῶν βαρβάρων ἀσεβείας.*

³ Ch. 17.

gods when they were fighting against the Persians. They were also to consider plans for freer commercial intercourse. These words of Plutarch are most important, and they rest on the best of authority. Cobet¹ has argued that Plutarch's source for this statement is nothing less than the decree of Pericles itself, which he found in the collection of Craterus. Wilamowitz, who has examined the question independently, has come to the same conclusion.² It is the statement as to the burnt temples which is of interest to us here. Why did Pericles call this meeting about the burnt temples, and what was its object? It was, I think, in order that the Greek states might revoke the oath which they had sworn not to rebuild the temples. The Acropolis with its burnt ruins had come to be an eye-sore to the Athenians, and Pericles desired to clear the ground and build a new temple. The only way he could do this without exciting hostile criticism was by appealing to the Greeks to recall their oath. This decree probably dates from about 450 B.C. The meeting planned was never held because of the opposition of the Spartans, but nevertheless the attempt to hold it seems not to have been altogether barren of results. It seems likely that some agreement was reached in the case of the temples, for, as I shall presently show, at about this time the burnt temples began to be restored.

Let us now examine the archaeological evidence on this question, that is, the evidence of the temples themselves.

Herodotus tells us that, aside from Athens, the Persians burned with their temples the following towns: Drymas,³ Charadra, Erochus, Tethronium or Tithronium, Amphicaea or Amphiclaea, Neon, Pedieis, Triteis, Elataea, Hyampolis, Parapotamii, Abae, Panopeus,⁴ Daulis, Aeolides, Thespieae,⁵ Plataea, and Eleusis.⁶ Excavations have been carried on at most of these sites, but the remains found have, as a rule, been so slight that no satisfactory conclusions can be drawn from them. For example, at Hyampolis the remains of the temples are so trifling that we cannot say whether they were rebuilt or not, but in a few cases we have more satisfactory evidence. At Elataea the remains of the temple of Athena show that the temple was rebuilt, and its proportions prove that

¹ *Mnemosyne*, N. S. Vol. I (1873) p. 113.

² *Aus K'ydathen*, p. 8 n. 8.

³ Herodotus, 8, 33.

⁴ 8, 35.

⁵ 8, 50.

⁶ 9, 65.

it was a little earlier than the so-called Theseum at Athens;¹ that is, the rebuilding dates from about 440 B.C. At Abae we have evidence that the temple of Apollo was never rebuilt. F. Koepp, who has discussed this question,² criticises the statement of Pausanias that the part of this temple not burnt by the Persians was burnt by the Phocians, and argues that it would have been impossible to distinguish between the two or to decide whether the building had been rebuilt or not. He thinks that the ruins could not have been left as they were at the end of the Persian wars, and that Pausanias cannot be relied upon when he says that they date from that time. But excavations carried on by members of the British School at Athens in 1894 have shown that the temple was never rebuilt;³ and what is more, all the fragments of the offerings found antedate the Persian wars.

The most striking example, however, is Eleusis. The temple destroyed by the Persians was not rebuilt until the time of Pericles. Strabo⁴ and Vitruvius⁵ even say that Ictinus was the architect, but Plutarch⁶ gives us the names of three other men who were said to have designed and erected the building. Dörpfeld asks how we can imagine the Athenians going without a temple of Athena from 480 until the building of the Parthenon. The worship of Demeter and Persephone in connection with the Eleusinian Mysteries was quite as important to the Athenians as the worship and festivals of Athena, and yet the temple at Eleusis was allowed to remain in ruins for a full generation after its destruction.

Of the temples of Hera on the road to Phalerum and of Demeter at Phalerum, both of which Pausanias⁷ cites as examples of temples not rebuilt, we can say little. In 1, 1, 5 Pausanias again speaks of the temple of Hera, adding that the people said that the statue in it was the work of Alcamenes, but that if that were the case the temple could not have been injured by the Medes. Koepp accepts this; but

¹ Frazer, *Pausanias*, Vol. V, p. 433.

² *Jahrbuch des deut. arch. Inst.* Vol. V (1890) p. 268 ff.

³ See *Journal of Hellenic Studies* Vol. XVI (1896) p. 291 ff.

⁴ 9, p. 395.

⁵ 7, praef. 16.

⁶ *Pericles* ch. 13.

⁷ 10, 35, 2.

the other alternative is equally justifiable, namely that the statue was not by Alcámenes.

There are two other temples which must be mentioned in this connection, one the temple at Sunium and the other the old temple at Rhamnus. The present temple at Sunium is built upon the foundations of an earlier temple which was undoubtedly destroyed by the Persians. This second temple was built, according to Dörpfeld,¹ about the time of the so-called Theseum, that is, not earlier than 440 B.C.

At Rhamnus the case is somewhat different. There are remains there of two temples, one of which is larger than the other. The small temple antedates the Persian wars, and its walls are still standing to a height of six or eight feet. The large temple is placed close beside the other and dates from about the middle of the fifth century. This temple was never finished. The finding in the old temple of votive statues dating from the fifth to the second century B.C. seems to prove that the temple was rebuilt. The later temple, therefore, can hardly have been built as the successor of the older one, as was formerly supposed. Unfortunately there is no evidence to show when the rebuilding of the older temple took place. These temples at Rhamnus therefore do not affect the present argument either way.

What then does the evidence of the temples prove? First, that some temples destroyed by the Persians were never rebuilt; second, that those which were rebuilt are not earlier than 450 B.C. In other words, the archaeological evidence bears out the literary evidence that no temple destroyed by the Persians was rebuilt before the time of Pericles.

In this connection one may well ask why the temple begun by Cimon on the site where the Parthenon was afterwards erected was never finished. The fact that his political opponents came into power may explain why work on the building was discontinued, but is hardly a sufficient reason to explain why the good material which had been collected was not used. It is perhaps not unlikely that Cimon's political opponents succeeded in persuading the people that the building of this temple was a violation of the oath; and that later on, Pericles, in order to avoid all similar criticism, asked the Greeks to revoke the oath so that he might begin entirely afresh his new temple, the Parthenon.

¹ *Athen. Mith.* Vol. IX (1884) p. 336.

It now remains for me to consider briefly two objections to the genuineness of this oath brought forward by Rehdantz¹ and accepted by Koepp.² They are based upon two passages, one in Isocrates and one a fragment of Theopompus. In the first passage Isocrates, after mentioning the fact that the Persians robbed and burned the temples of the gods, says,³ διὸ καὶ τοὺς Ἴωνας ἀξίον ἐπαινεῖν, ὅτι τῶν ἐμπρησθέντων ἱερῶν ἐπηράσαντ' εἴ τινες κινήσειαν ἢ πάλιν εἰς τάρχαϊα καταστήσαι βουλῇειεν, οὐκ ἀποροῦντες πόθεν ἐπισκευάσωσιν, ἀλλ' ἔν' ὑπόμνημα τοῖς ἐπιγιγνομένοις ἢ τῆς τῶν βαρβάρων ἀσεβείας, κτλ. Rehdantz and Koepp think it strange that Isocrates should mention such an oath of the Ionians and not mention that of the Greeks, if it existed. The difficulty, however, is not as great as appears at first sight. I have already shown that the oath of the Greeks was probably revoked in the time of Pericles. Consequently it no longer existed in the time of Isocrates, and so could not appropriately be referred to by him. This objection therefore falls to the ground.

The second objection is found in a fragment of Theopompus⁴ in which he says that Ἑλληνικὸς ὄρκος καταψεύδεται, ὃν Ἀθηναῖοί φασιν ὁμόσαι τοὺς Ἑλλήνας πρὸ τῆς μάχης τῆς ἐν Πλαταιαῖς πρὸς τοὺς βαρβάρους. This is only a fragment, and we cannot say whether Theopompus is referring to this oath about the temples or to some other. Two other oaths were taken by the Greeks before Plataea⁵ and the reference may be to one of them. But let us suppose for the sake of argument that Theopompus is referring to this oath about the temples. How then are we to explain away the passage in Plutarch, a passage granted to be based upon the best of authority, an official inscription? But this passage in Theopompus must be read with caution; for just below it he continues, ἔτι δὲ καὶ τὴν ἐν Μαραθῶνι μάχην, οὐχ ἅμα πάντες ὑμνοῦσι γεγενημένην, καὶ ὅσα ἄλλα, φησὶν, ἢ Ἀθηναίων πόλις ἀλαζονεύεται καὶ παρακρούεται τοὺς Ἑλλήνας. A fragment of this sort, torn away from its context, so that we do not know what the author was talking about, can count for little, and so may be dismissed.

¹ *Iykurgos gegen Leokrates*, p. 173.

² *Op. cit.* p. 272.

³ 4, 156.

⁴ Frag. 167 in Müller's *F. H. G.* Vol. I, p. 306.

⁵ See Rehdantz, *Op. cit.* p. 173

Let me now very briefly sum up my conclusions. I think that the evidence shows that the Greeks did not rebuild any of the temples destroyed by the Persians before the time of Pericles; that the old temple of Athena was therefore never rebuilt; that Pericles, wishing to beautify the Acropolis, or perhaps to build a secure place for the money coming in from the Confederacy of Delos, called a meeting of the Greeks, one of the objects of which was to revoke the oath about the temples. The meeting did not take place; but the oath was revoked, and from that time on many of the old temples were rebuilt. At Athens the Acropolis was cleared of its ruins and the Parthenon begun.